

Module 11

Employee

Relations

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Employee Relations

Employee relations refer to the working relationship that exists and develops between employees (both individually and collectively) and the management of an organization.

It determines how these two parties interact with each other when determining terms and conditions of employment, during dispute negotiation and resolution, and throughout day-to-day operations.

Management is responsible for developing and implementing policies designed to ensure that this relationship is appropriate for achieving organizational objectives.

The objectives of employees and employers are diametrically opposed. Employers are attempting to obtain the highest profit margin possible whilst employees are trying to achieve the highest wage level possible. A conflict of interest is bound to occur!

The role of the Human Resources Manager is to ensure that a harmonious relationship develops between the management and the employees of an organization.

The HR Manager must ensure that the organizational objectives are achieved and that the employees are fully aware of these goals and objectives and the role that they play in achieving them.

The HR Manager is responsible for ensuring that all aspects of the employment cycle for each individual employee is administered effectively and efficiently.

The HR Manager must ensure that the state of employee relations is also measured regularly and any remedial action taken as soon as possible to prevent, in the first instance, or, to limit the length of any industrial disputes. The evaluation of the current state of employee relations may be made by use of specific Key Performance Indicators (KPIs) or by the conduct of an employee relation's audit.

The state of employee relations can be measured by: -

- the level of absenteeism.
- the level of employee morale.
- the level of employee participation in the decision-making process.
- the level of productivity.
- the number and length of industrial disputes.
- the level of staff turnover.

Role of human resources manager in employee relations

- Communicate,
- Monitor training,
- Provide motivational strategies,
- provide an appropriate culture

Conflict between Management and employees

Conflict between management and employees is bound to occur. The HR Manager must work to prevent such disputes and conflict from occurring so that there is minimal disruption to workplace activities and so that there is minimal performance gap. A proactive stance to dispute and conflict resolution must be taken by the HR Manager.

Types of Conflicts

The forms that this conflict may take include:

- **strikes by employees**
- **bans on commencement of work sites and boycotts on continued work**
- **stop work meetings**
- **'go slow' and 'work to rules' conditions imposed by employees**
- **demarcation disputes between unions**
- **lock-outs by management**
- **picketing of workplaces**
- **disciplinary action taken by management**

Proactive Strategies

The HR Manager can avoid such disputes if the following action is taken. Management should:

- educate employees about the goals and objectives of the organization
- communicate to all employees the changes taking place in the workplace
- motivate and maintain enthusiasm amongst employees
- understand employee needs and listen to what they are saying
- develop a collaborative atmosphere and culture between employees and management
- establish committees with representatives of management and employees to discuss local issues
- promote a change culture amongst employees develop more team strategies within the workplace

Application of Management Styles

A HR Manager should adopt a participative management style if the talents, skills and diversity of the organization's workforce are to be fully utilized. This management style is conducive to higher levels of employee satisfaction and empowerment. Such a level of employee involvement will ensure greater ownership of the decisions by employees and develop a harmonious relationship between employees and management.

There are many skills that the manager should exhibit if the state of employee relations is to be improved within an organization

- PEOPLE SKILLS

Verbal communication skills

Listening skills

Body language skills

'Soft' people skills

Interpersonal skills

- TRAINING SKILLS

Supervising skills

Meeting skills Team

building skills

Evaluating skills

Appraising skills

- DECISION-MAKING SKILLS

Dispute/conflict resolution skills

Problem solving skills

Mediating skills

Negotiating skills

Delegating skills.